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PART 234—GRADE CROSSING SIGNAL SYSTEM SAFETY AND STATE ACTION PLANS

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AUTHORITY: 49 U.S.C. 20103, 20107; 28 U.S.C. 2461, note; Pub. L. 110–432, Div. A, §202; and 49 CFR 1.49.

SOURCE: 61 FR 31806, June 20, 1996, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—General

§ 234.1 Scope.

This part imposes minimum maintenance, inspection, and testing standards for highway-rail grade crossing warning systems. This part also prescribes standards for the reporting of failures of such systems and prescribes minimum actions railroads must take when such warning systems malfunction. This part also requires particular identified States to develop State highway-rail grade crossing action plans. This part does not restrict a railroad or a State from adopting and enforcing

additional or more stringent requirements not inconsistent with this part.

[75 FR 36558, June 28, 2010]

§ 234.3 Application.

With the exception of § 234.11, this part applies to all railroads except:

(a) A railroad that exclusively operates freight trains only on track which is not part of the general railroad system of transportation;

(b) Rapid transit operations within an urban area that are not connected to the general railroad system of transportation; and

(c) A railroad that operates passenger trains only on track inside an installation that is insular; i.e., its operations are limited to a separate enclave in such a way that there is no reasonable expectation that the safety of the public—except a business guest, a licensee of the railroad or an affiliated entity, or a trespasser—would be affected by the operation. An operation will not be considered insular if one or more of the following exists on its line:

(1) A public highway-rail crossing that is in use;

(2) An at-grade rail crossing that is in use;

(3) A bridge over a public road or waters used for commercial navigation; or

(4) A common corridor with a railroad, i.e., its operations are within 30 feet of those of any railroad.

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§ 234.5 Definitions.

As used in this part:

Activation failure means the failure of an active highway-rail grade crossing warning system to indicate the approach of a train at least 20 seconds prior to the train's arrival at the crossing, or to indicate the presence of a train occupying the crossing, unless the crossing is provided with an alternative means of active warning to highway users of approaching trains. (This failure indicates to the motorist that it is safe to proceed across the railroad tracks when, in fact, it is not safe to do so.) A grade crossing signal system does not indicate the approach of a train within the meaning of this paragraph if—more than 50% of the flashing lights (not gate arm lights) on

any approach lane to the crossing are not functioning as intended, or in the case of an approach lane for which two or more pairs of flashing lights are provided, there is not at least one flashing light pair operating as intended. Back lights on the far side of the crossing are not considered in making these determinations.

Appropriately equipped flagger means a person other than a train crewmember who is equipped with a vest, shirt, or jacket of a color appropriate for daytime flagging such as orange, yellow, strong yellow green or fluorescent versions of these colors or other generally accepted high visibility colors. For nighttime flagging, similar outside garments shall be retro reflective. Acceptable hand signal devices for daytime flagging include “STOP/SLOW” paddles or red flags. For nighttime flagging, a flashlight, lantern, or other lighted signal shall be used. Inasmuch as Part VI of the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices addresses standards and guides for flaggers and flagging equipment for highway traffic control, FRA recommends that railroads be aware of the standards and follow them to the greatest extent possible. Copies of the latest MUTCD provisions regarding flagging will be available from FRA, as well as FMCSA, as changes are made in this area.

Credible report of system malfunction means specific information regarding a malfunction at an identified highway-rail crossing, supplied by a railroad employee, law enforcement officer, highway traffic official, or other employee of a public agency acting in an official capacity.

False activation means the activation of a highway-rail grade crossing warning system caused by a condition that requires correction or repair of the grade crossing warning system. (This failure indicates to the motorist that it is not safe to cross the railroad tracks when, in fact, it is safe to do so.)

Highway-rail grade crossing means a location where a public highway, road, street, or private roadway, including associated sidewalks and pathways, crosses one or more railroad tracks at grade.